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## Letter From Francis Mairs Huntington-Wilson to Philander C. Knox, February 2, 1909

Francis Mairs Huntington-Wilson

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No. 1155 16th Street,  
Washington, D. C.,  
February 2, 1909.

Dear Senator Knox:

You were good enough to ask me my ideas from a foreign office point of view as to what should be the duties of the new Under Secretary and the new Fourth Assistant Secretary. I shall now endeavor to express a few impressions upon the subject.

If there be truth in the rumor that Anglophobia makes the House oppose the designation "Under Secretary", might not "Vice Secretary", "Secretary General" or "Principal Assistant Secretary" be a suitable alternative?

The more I reflect, the more I am convinced that the duties of the Under Secretary should not be defined or limited in their scope. I think the Under Secretary should be the alter ego and understudy of the Secretary of State and should know and reflect his ideas upon all matters relating to the Department and the foreign service. There are daily many decisions to be made, - decisions the postponement of each one of which paralyzes some part of the administrative machine. The Secretary himself cannot give time to all these and an Under Secretary in close touch with his chief could give those concerned the necessary authority to go ahead, thus leaving the Secretary's time free for broader questions. Responsibility for different parts of the machine being parceled out among the assistant secretaries, the Under Secretary and his chief would find it easy to keep the machine running and to keep in hand the proper general supervision. The Under Secretary would also be able to relieve his chief of much of the business of receiving visitors, which is so enormously wasteful of time.

As you know, my first thought was that the Under Secretary would of course be a diplomatic officer knowing foreign languages, accustomed to dealing with diplomats and a good technical man in all matters of diplomatic procedure. Being the



highest official under the Secretary of State, he will inevitably have to be in close touch with the diplomatic corps and discuss with them various pending matters.

Then too, there is the entertainment of the diplomatic corps, so useful in maintaining with them the most favorable relations. Meeting frequently and informally the members of the Senate and of the House, and especially of the Foreign Relations and Foreign Affairs Committees, is, I think, of the utmost importance in breaking down mutual mistrust and in bring about that harmonious and frank cooperation which is so absolutely indispensable to keeping the Department in a position to do its work. The Under Secretary might share in maintaining the relations referred to with the diplomats, the Capitol, and the press.

The Secretary of State now personally receives the newspaper men once a day. Probably the Under Secretary would be the best man to share this work.

It is not possible to comply with the request with which you honored me without touching somewhat upon the duties of all the assistant secretaries. In doing so there is nothing which I feel I should emphasize more than the suggestion that there be a meeting at least once a week of the Secretary and the assistant secretaries for general discussion of those matters which any one of them may have in hand. Such a practice would be of inestimable benefit in coordinating the work of all, in preventing delay and in making sure that the Department should present to the world a united and consistent front.

If the Under Secretary is disposed of as above suggested, i.e., as an alter ego of his chief, we then have four assistant secretaries among whom is to be distributed the active supervision of and responsibility for all the work. The assistant secretary highest in rank has in the past usually had quite general duties, so that in effect we shall now have four instead of two men among whom the various directions may be divided.



Chief Clerk's office has grown to be practically an assistant secretaryship. Mr. Carr has charge of the administration of the consular service, signing all the consular mail; the Departmental, diplomatic and consular budgets; consular personnel; departmental personnel; official invitations, precedents and arrangements for official functions; the Diplomatic Lists; the reception of miscellaneous callers and their direction to the proper offices; the giving out of general information to the press; the Department's exhibits at Expositions; the signing of authentications of the Seal; Congressional Gallery cards; the pouch service; and the cipher codes. In fact, because of his efficiency, Mr. Carr has been loaded down with a great variety of work which is far too much for one man to handle and which places him under an unjustly severe strain. The work he does, you will notice, exceeds that of most assistant secretaries both in volume and importance. Mr. Carr has great administrative ability, has served in the Department sixteen years and has, under the Secretary himself, brought the consular service up to its present level. In him you have ready-made the ideal man to run the consular service under your direction. Of course it is an anomaly and an absurdity that the officer doing this work should be called "Chief Clerk" and I think you will find it best so soon as one of the assistant secretaries can be assigned to the foreign service to appoint Mr. Carr in his place as the assistant secretary administering the consular service under your direction. I think in the Department of State the office of Chief Clerk might even be abolished or at least be reduced to a very small one.

Mr. Adey is an invaluable encyclopedia of information and a splendid counselor and adviser on all diplomatic matters. This work takes up his time and he makes no pretense of supervising the administration of the diplomatic service. This, alas, is not attended to by any one.

To give employment to two additional assistant sec-



retaries, the First and the Fourth, I should think you would, first, give one of them the administrative direction of the diplomatic service, including its finances, and the general routine administration of the Department itself and of its budget. These duties, with a general responsibility for the entire budget, Departmental, diplomatic and consular, might form a good field for one assistant secretary.

Remaining unassigned work of considerable importance is the supervision of matters of personnel and protocol, including precedence, the arrangement of functions and the many little wants of the diplomatic corps. One duty of the Secretary of State which takes considerable time and is not very interesting is the presentation to the President of new ambassadors and ministers, a purely formal function. In many foreign offices, this is done by an official called the "Introducer of Ambassadors", who is also the authority on ceremony, precedence, etc., and is the official for the diplomatic corps to come to about all sorts of little matters. I would suggest that this work might be definitely assigned to a fourth assistant secretary. I think he should be given responsibility for and supervision over all matters of personnel and protocol. He might also have the work connected with expositions, scientific congresses, etc.

One assistant secretary should have the administrative direction of the consular service and one of the diplomatic service.

It is not quite possible to discuss the work of the different assistant secretaries without considering them personally, especially in the case of Mr. Adee, the Nestor of the Department. In any politico-geographical arrangement Mr. Adee might, besides his general advice supervise our business with all of the World except Latin America and the Far East, the conduct of business with the latter of which is now provided for.



As you know, Mr. Buchanan and Mr. Chandler Anderson have been, in effect, counselors on Latin America and British affairs, respectively. After the Far East, Latin America most urgently needs special treatment on the politico-geographical principle and one of the assistant secretaries should, I think, be given the direction of Latin American business with the establishment of a division of Latin American affairs.

Of course I think the numerical designation of the assistant secretaries should be abolished and that the work should be distributed among them according to their abilities and that in the future when you have got the Department organized on some logical basis the assistants should be chosen according to the work you want done. If the numerical designation were abolished, the assistant secretaries might take charge of the Department, in the absence of the Secretary and the Under Secretary, in the order of their seniority, subject to a different order by the President.

From tomorrow, my wife and I shall be at the Shoreham Hotel until Sunday the 7th at least. We of course desire to pay our respects to Mrs. Knox before leaving and I am particularly anxious that my wife also know you. Will you be good enough, if convenient, to appoint a time when we may have the pleasure of seeing Mrs. Knox and you before leaving?

Yours very sincerely,